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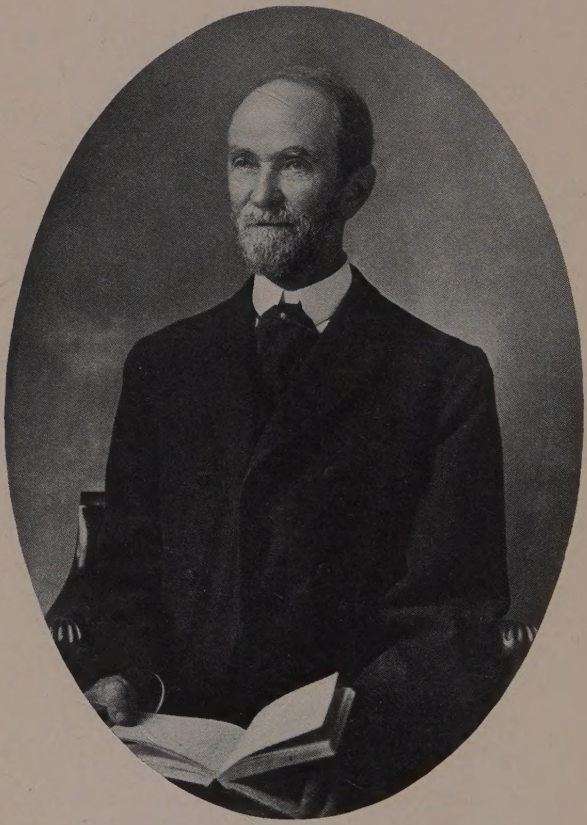
THE EARNEST EXPECTATION



Isaac Crook

THE EARNEST EXPECTATION

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By

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Dedicated

to the memory of my devout father,

John Crook,

whose prayers linked my childhood with heaven, and to the memory of my gifted, spiritually minded mother,

Anna Sherwood Crook,

who led me to "seek first the kingdom of God."

PREFACE

The following sermons have been suggested by many of the rarest hearers as well as the finest preachers in Methodism, six of whom have furnished volumes in this series.

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I.

THROUGH THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

"The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the Sons of God."—ROM. VIII, 19.

AS AN interpretation of this text, one found in a subsequent verse says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Here is announced the Gospel of Hope. It were easy to become bewildered in a world of speculation concerning the narrow and the wider meaning of this text. By that folly much time has been wasted and many a sermon rendered useless. Life is too earnest, human suffering too intense, and our Gospel hope too glorious to allow us to be diverted from the main purpose of Paul in making these statements.

We might call this the "evolution" of the kingdom of God had not that word been somewhat overworked. We prefer to name it "The Glorious Expectation." It is supported by such Scriptures

as—"This light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

I. First, let us consider the scope of the meaning of the word "creation." Is it identical with the word "creature" in the twenty-second verse? Many of the best exegetes so believe.

That great Greek scholar and luminous interpreter of Scripture, the late Professor William G. Williams, confines the meaning of the word to our physical manhood, and disputes its application to anything outside of human nature. He thus sweeps away all views including the vegetable and animal world in the curse of sin.

Mr. Wesley, in the opposite extreme, has left us a sermon on "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes." My boy friend had caught that view when he severely denounced father Adam for eating the apple, and so making it necessary for boys to fight weeds and brambles. Older and more learned children have believed that death, entering the world by sin, passed into all animal life, including even the fossils in the rocks. Is not this extreme literalism?

May not criticism go too far in the other direction? The very learned critic, Professor Williams, from whom to differ would seem to smack of conceit and irreverence, draws the entire meaning of this passage into a Greek phrase in the eighteenth verse, translated "To usward." This phrase he uses like a narrow channel through which to run the whole passage, both text and context. Is this not venturesome for even so masterly a scholar and so devout a saint?

Our loyalty must swing to Paul, and on beyond him to the wider visions of idealism as interpreted by human experience, as well as by the consensus of great expositors. Creation is greater than critic, philosopher, or apostle.

It may not be that the mammoth and the mollusk began to die when Adam sinned, for serpents and thorns then appear for the first time. It may not be that the earnest expectation of the creature gives promise that Bucephalus is to appear in heaven, or that crocodiles shall play harmless in the glassy sea before the throne.

But may it not be that sin struck our home so violently as to damage and demoralize it? That which fell on Eden, vague and mysterious (mystical, if you prefer), may have accomplished wide-

spread ruin and hurt. When it finally struck the Lamb of Calvary there was darkness and earthquake, the rocks and the tombs were rent amid the wailing of sinful men. The creation groaned and travailed.

Whether the curse of sin involved the creation outside of man or not, we do know that it is the inhabitant who largely gives character to the home. A saint can turn a hut into a palace, while a human devil can render a royal house a very hell.

No human saintliness prevents pain, wasting, heartbreak, and dying. "We groan within ourselves." We do see war among the elements in God's world. Let those mysteries we call carbon and oxygen come together, and the touch of a match will destroy a city block. Let them meet in the bowels of the earth, then farewell to the homes of man. Let an angry peasant hurl an epithet at a Russian officer, and there follows a convulsion which shakes the throne of the Czar. Fire a single shot, and hundreds of thousands of lives are destroyed amid all the horrors of war. Let the grain or the fruits but ferment, and then touch the palate of thirst in weak men, and there follows the march of hundreds of thousands of victims to drunkards' graves amid all the horrors

of broken vows, ruined homes, and crushed hearts. Cowper voiced a sublime protest:

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more! My ear is pained,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled!"

The problem of evil has been grappled, but never solved. Butler has thrown some light upon it in his "Analogy." Professor Naville has accomplished about all that philosophy may achieve in that solution. Job cried out amidst its darkness, "O that Thou wouldst hide me in Sheol till Thy wrath be past!" It is confronted in this Epistle to the Romans. John, in the Apocalypse, beheld the "smoke of torment ascending up for ever." Christ Himself cried out from Calvary, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The same darkness surrounds every withering flower, every broken-winged bird, every beast of prey, every crippled child, every drowned boy, every youth cut down in his young manhood; it overhangs every cemetery, and has turned the earth into a graveyard of human hopes and ambitions, until its

voice seems to break upon the darkening heavens, "groaning and travailing in pain until now."

Paul has been called the logician, and such he is: but he is far more. In the best sense, he is a rhetorician. He appeals to the intellect and the judgment; but beyond that, like all other Scripture writers, he addresses the imagination. No man can understand the sacred Scriptures who represses this faculty of the soul.

The power of attention resembles the eagle's talons. The power of will is like its spine. The imagination is like the wings, whereby flight is had heavenwards. By ignoring this faculty, sad havoc has been made in dogmatic theology.

In this Epistle and especially in the seventh, eighth, and ninth chapters, great use is made of symbolic speech and comprehensive metaphor. While it may be conceded that human nature is personified as the center of the subject in hand, more comprehensive personifications sweep around creation.

Our text reminds one of that strange Egyptian ideal embodied in the Sphinx. There it has stood in the sands for thousands of years, a mighty lion-shaped form, crouching amid the drift that gathers around as if to bury it. That verges into a human

neck and head, solemnly and sublimely looking away over the horizon, as if in expectation of the dawn of some better day. It seems to say, "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God."

The gifted Greek made a Sphinx more suggestive than that of Egypt. It also had the lion form of strength, the wings for speed, and a woman's bosom of nutrition, with face and eyes looking afar. Thebes had incurred its wrath. A riddle was propounded. Should any undertake to solve and fail, he was at once devoured. And are not curious minds swallowed up in this mystery of creation? But when Œdipus guessed that the animal which walks on four feet in the morning, on two at noon, on three at night, was man, then the defeated Sphinx swallowed itself. Is it not so that mystery is retiring within itself before human intelligence, enlightened from Divine wisdom?

Whether this world shall constitute the new heaven and the new earth of the better time coming, or we shall be transferred to some other sphere, is most interesting speculation; but nothing can be proven. Could there be a hundred generations of sinlessness on this globe, it is doubtful whether any could desire a better eternal home.

Hope at least includes this outer world in this "Expectation."

II. The main drift of thought in these chapters of Paul is confined to the conflict going on within human nature itself; between the flesh and the Spirit. "If we live after the flesh, we shall die; if after the Spirit, we shall live." "The flesh is under the law," and there is no salvation in that direction. Christ took upon Him the "sameness" of the flesh, and became obedient unto death so as to free them who are Christ's from the law and its penalty. They are, therefore, at liberty to live after the Spirit. They come into touch with the Holy Spirit, and as He says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "If sons, then heirs; heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, having received the adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Reverting to an earlier chapter, we find Paul summing up in behalf of humanity under sin and the law, defeated and bound, crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Turning to the other side, he exclaims, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ."

It is in the sweep of this mighty current of

inspiration that there appears to us the whole creation "groaning and travailing in pain together until now," and then the same creation (ktisis), looking for the "manifestation of the sons of God."

> "That one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

We must not miss the chief benefit of this great revelation. It comes even closer home to us in that sentence of Paul's, "We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here is a war between the flesh and the Spirit, of which every awakened man is fully conscious. The higher he rises into the light, the more insistently will he inquire, "Who shall deliver us?"

The word "sincere" means, literally, without wax: like honey strained till no shred of comb prevents its transparency. The sincerest Christians discover within themselves tendencies, ambitions, antagonisms, capabilities of sedition, which may spring in a night like evil weeds in the finest garden.

Who of us have not dreams in which we are compelled to wade through slime and grime, forced to appear in public with garments befouled, until

we awake from very torment? And who of us have not, when the waking comes, raised the question, "Do we so appear before God, with all our purposed righteousness and avowed sincerity?" "Our righteousness seems but filthy rags." Then we "groan and travail in pain."

Nor does it relieve the case when we look at men who, having accepted the Gospel and its Savior so heartily as to leap clear, apparently, from the pool of sin, they exult and rejoice aloud; even pitying their brethren whom they regard on a lower plane. How often one can not rely on even them to keep their promises or control their tongues! Nor can we stop at them. Did not the apostle Peter, after the Transfiguration and the Holy Communion, curse and swear? Did not James and John aim to circumvent their brethren in office-seeking? Did not Paul, after the Pentecost, denounce Peter as a trimmer? Seeing these things are so, what is to become of me if I submit to the service of the flesh? "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Where are the people not in danger of heading deathwards? This is our battleground.

Thorwaldsen did not mean to illustrate this battle when he carved his Lion of Lucerne. In that grotto is a wall of sandstone jutting out from

the Alps, and on the stone is carved a mighty lion twenty-eight feet in length. He lies limp and prone, with his sorrowful head resting upon his paw, which covers the French lily, and one can almost hear him groan, so sad and sick is his noble face. The legend commemorates the bravery and fidelity of the Swiss Guard which fell in the defense of the Tuileries. The broken arrow piercing through his vitals shows why he died. So may the Gospel arrow strike your evil and mine to the death, that we may live unto God.

"If ye through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

"Waiting!" "How long, O Lord, how long?" Paul in the flesh has lain a long time there outside of Rome; far longer Moses where the angels buried him; longer yet, Abraham at Machpelah. "Where is the promise of His coming?" How the dead slip out of our lives by the flight of time, and make the manifestation remote! "One day is as a thousand years to the Lord; so may it be to those who have departed and are with Him, which is far better."

If in presenting thus meagerly a few hints at the unspeakable richness of this revelation I can

induce any to re-examine it so as to catch something of its flood of light upon our dark pathway, I have not written in vain.

My first primer taught me that "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." I could not then admit the charge, nor can I yet. In fact, I have been inclined to answer it by saying, "In Cain his murder, we sinned furder." One is as true as the other. Every man born into the world comes with a double inheritance: one, the sinwardness of Adam's nature; the other, the proffer of salvation through the Second Adam. God is too just and too good not to give every man a fair chance, and more.

This theme was presented on the occasion of the monthly lecture before the Ohio Wesleyan University, and met with most cordial approval from that great preacher, President Charles H. Payne. It was afterwards presented in the University Lecture at College Park, California, while yet under the shadow of an unspeakable bereavement. And if it shall throw any corresponding light into the life of any reader, I shall have reached my highest ambition. Together we adopt the assurance, "I am persuaded that neither death,

nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"In pain until now, looking for the manifestation," begun, continuing, completed.

II.

THROUGH OUTWARD DISASTER.

"In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison desirous to apprehend me; and through a window, was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands."—2 Cor. xi, 32, 33.

"I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee."—Acts xxvi, 17.

"The angel of Jehovah campeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."—Psa. xxxiv, 7.

The first passage quoted is the text. The two following its interpretation.

The sermon here reproduced has proven serviceable on a number of Commencement occasions.

The scene presented, showing Paul in a basket, corresponds to graduation from the modern theological school. The primary education of Paul took place in his native city, Tarsus. It was, at

that time, one of three literary centers of the world, only rivaled by Athens and Alexandria.

His further education, corresponding to a course in our colleges, especially denominational in their character, took place in Jerusalem under the training of Gamaliel. In so far as the Faculty is known, he constituted the main part of it. The truth still remains that a college consists more in professor than in apparatus. How one studies and under whose direction, rather than what one studies, determines the value in results.

Saul must have felt himself equipped for his life-work. He was possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, for he says concerning Stephen, "I gave my vote against him." He seems to have exercised the function of prosecuting attorney, or inquisitor general, and, having obtained letters from the high priest, went forth to a "foreign city, Damascus."

God saw that he needed post-graduate preparation for his life-work. This consisted of two essentials,—first, his regeneration. This, for the present, we pass over. He must retire for three years into Arabia for training. We do not know that he had any other teachers than the Scriptures he had so woefully mistaken, and private research

under the enlightening of the Holy Spirit; but when he came back from those three years, he resumed the work of preaching on the scene of his conversion, Damascus. The other apostles seemed to have enjoyed some of them, at least the elementary education common to the Jewish boy; and for their secondary training, a three years' course under the most masterful teacher of all the world, Jesus of Nazareth. They further enjoyed the teaching of the Spirit, "who took of these things and showed them unto them."

Saul, like most of our modern preachers of the Gospel, needed that three years' Arabian training. It did not rob him of intensity or heroism; we need not fear for the outcome of Boston, Drew, Garrett, so long as they send out their classes singing, as they repeatedly do at their Commencement occasions,

> "Faith of our fathers, glorious faith,
> We will be true to thee till death."

There may seem some oddity in the selection of this event in Paul's life for a sermon. Not for that would we choose it. Often the preacher brings a meaning from outside, and puts it into the text; or he may draw a lesson from it, overlooking the real purpose for which it was written. Can we not

find the purpose of Paul by noting where he puts this scene?

In his letter to the Corinthians, this incident is between the parts of a double climax.

I. It stands as the lowest step in a series of more than twenty humiliations which he mentions. Let us name them rapidly. He admits his abasements: "Rude in speech;" "self-support;" "foolish;" "in prisons oft;" "in stripes;" "in deaths oft;" "five times thirty-nine stripes;" "thrice beaten with rods;" "stoned;" "thrice shipwrecked;" "night and a day in the deep;" "journeyings often;" "river perils;" "robber perils;" "of the Gentiles;" "in the city;" "in the wilderness;" "by sea;" "from traitors;" "travail;" "hunger;" "thirst;" "fasting;" "nakedness;" "care of the Churches;" "sympathy with the weak and suffering;" "in weakness;" and here at the bottom of all, a "fugitive by night in a basket." Possibly the climax might be inverted so as to make this humiliating flight the diamond-point or flashlight on the dark.

II. From this terminal point in his catalogue of abasements he turns to his exaltations, "into the third heaven," where he heard things unutterable; so outside of himself as to endanger his humility, requiring "the thorn in the flesh."

This Commencement scene, launching him upon his life-work, is full of many an impressive lesson. It might suggest the value of literary training in childhood, and of industrial education. Like all Jewish youth, he had a trade; his was tent-making. Further, he knew the law of his land, civil and religious, and was an intense *patriot.* There is abundant evidence of an increasing growth of such manhood in our own country. More important to him and the world was his *religious enlightenment,* at Damascus and in Arabia, preparing for the most important human career aside from that of the man of Galilee. Nor did he undertake this work as a novice; he was approaching the age of forty. It is not always best to be in haste.

John Knox was over forty before the world knew him, but had time to become acquainted with the papacy. After that, two years at the galleys taught him the lesson of prayer. Then banishment, the use of the sword of the Spirit, so that his last thirteen years might be effective.

What was there in that escape by the wall of Damascus making it worthy of such prominence in Paul's letter to Corinth?

It was a retreat before danger, always difficult for a brave man. Soldiers hear the command of

retreat with dismay. It hurts a moral hero still more. To flee from Jezebel to-day is to be asking for death to-morrow. For Paul to be let out of a lodge on a wall in a basket, and away into the dark, what could be more humiliating? Others since have known the bitterness of death when necessity has demanded retirement from some great field of battle in the leadership of a college, a reform, a Church, or a business, and have been ready to cry out, "All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me," or "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Draw near to the scene on the wall at Damascus that night. The armed guard was on the watch, and might have been seen through the dimness of the night. They represented a very old-time and common argument against truth, "Kill him;" the argument that has never gone out of use from that day to this. It has furnished the Inquisition and supplied its counterpart when Protestants, after having seized upon their own liberty, have also snatched away that of those who disagreed with them. More than we are aware of, our motives are expressed by "We forbade him because he followeth not us." Paul himself

had come to that city three years before, armed with the same argument; and now it is turned against him in the form of a literal Damascus blade in the hands of the guard desirous to apprehend him.

We have called this a Commencement scene. That suggests a contrast. The scene had its elements of interest and beauty, and might have appealed to the graduate under other circumstances. From the top of that wall, secreted doubtless in one of the lodges still found there, Paul might have heard the music of the rivulets flowing amidst dense verdure from the Abana, as it divides to turn that city into a garden-spot of the earth. It is so to-day as it was then. True, there were no bouquets for the graduate that night, yet the flowers were near at hand; the fragrance of orange-bloom and damask roses was wafted, then as now, upon the quiet night air. There could be no music furnished by orchestra or cornet. The night-bird may have taught its lesson of faith and trust. The audience was small. We know not who they were, but most likely Ananias, who three years before had called him "Brother Saul," and baptized him; possibly Judas had left his house in the street called Straight—a street that has outlasted many

a generation; and others whose names are in the Book of Life were there to save his life.

A basket of twisted rope is at hand, possibly used to carry figs or fish. Not very large quarters for a passenger; but the man himself was "mean in bodily presence," likely not larger than Isaac Watts or John Wesley; but it was the greatest cargo that ever issued from Damascus. No General Naaman with Syrian army ever went from Damascus so to affect the destinies of mankind as he who went out that night.

From the overjutting window of the lodge, see him silently lowered. Those hands holding that rope must have been watched over by "the angel of the Lord, who campeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." It would be joy enough in all their after life to recount the events of that night, and to glory in having had a hand on that rope. So by prayer the tenants held the rope for Princeton, the women for Oberlin College and the religious institutions of the nation. So, in closet and family altars, sons are launched. Would that more were ministers!

When men graduate in our day, they can sometimes even afford to leave Alma Mater in a palace car; but if too poor and obliged to foot

it, there is encouragement to know that Paul graduated from a lodge on a wall, and started in a basket, stealing away in the darkness on his way toward Jerusalem, where he arrived after a journey of one hundred and forty-seven miles, requiring nearly a week, furnished it may be with a lunch and wallet. Before taking final leave, he may have turned aside for a moment for a look at the place over which many a modern has sung,—

> "O hallowed hour, O sacred spot,
> Where love Divine first found me;
> Wherever falls my distant lot,
> My heart shall linger round thee."

He likely crossed the Jordan at the foot of the Sea of Galilee, now illuminated by the memory of Him who had walked its waters, and had calmed a storm within his own soul. When his southward journey brought him in sight of Mount Zion, he would now understand the end of sacrifices, and Calvary would be to him the light of the world, while the spot of the martyr Stephen's death would again convince him that he was the "chief of sinners."

Our first text is interpreted by the second, "I will deliver thee," and this anchors back into the other, "The angel of Jehovah campeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

It may be trite to say, "A man is immortal till his work is done;" but who can tell what his work may be, and when it is ended? It is doubtful whether the end ever comes.

God will chose His workmen if they will allow, and He will see to it that no weapon formed against them shall prosper in the doing of it. He has a wonderful way of bringing men together. You may start out on some Divine errand, seeing only your side of the case, but the man who is to meet you may be unknown. See how it was with Peter,—apparently at his wits' end on the housetop at Joppa, little knowing that forty miles away was a Roman soldier, by fasting and prayer preparing to open the door to Peter. Here is Saul starting on the apparently hopeless flight, aimlessly, so far as we know, toward Jerusalem; but at that end is Barnabas, ready to introduce him to the apostles and Peter. Nor did such conjunction of men and means ever fail in his life, nor can they fail so long as our triple text remains true.

Be it ours therefore, never to say "Can't." "All things are possible to him that believeth." This is pre-eminently important in these days of "open-door emergency" and "aggressive evangelism."

His commission was clear, his aggressiveness

unconquerable. The first must obtain, if the ranks of the Christian ministry are not to dwindle and perish. Our aggressiveness must not lose its edge in mere platitudes about practical Christianity. It is important for us to enforce the doctrine, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of these, ye did it unto Me;" but, for the sake of emphasis, the evangelism which convicts of sin and secures repentance and pardon may be overshadowed and discounted in behalf of material charity. We are endangered by installing Shakespeare, Browning, Goethe, and Emerson as though equals of the prophets and apostles in authority. We read it in romance, hear it in sermons, and find it in editorial columns and university lectures.

Some years ago a small coterie of Church members and outsiders in the capital city of Ohio made it known that they would teach the orthodox Churches a lesson. They went about the work of helping the poor and needy with a beautiful enthusiasm and refinement; they secured a man in the pulpit who, as their leader, blew a loud trumpet, but it lacked what Congregational Unitarianism has found a fatal omission. There was really no aggressive Gospel in their preaching. The last time I saw their prophet, he was walking the

streets with an appearance as sad as his seedy garments. Our Gospel is mightily braced with good works on one side, and intellectuality on the other. But the entering wedge is a Gospel of "power and the Holy Spirit and much fullness." The earnest expectation of the creation looks forward from storm and prison and martyrdom, but none the less from the window, in a basket by the wall. There was yet a fourth Commencement for Paul: *"I have finished my course,"* that is for you and me and all. Be it ours to say as truly as could he, "I have kept the faith."

"O that each in the day
Of his coming may say,
I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work
Thou didst give me to do."

III.

AMID THE TRIUMPHS OF WRONG.

"To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose."—ROM. VIII, 28.

When at Ephesus Paul said, "After I have been there [Jerusalem], I must also see Rome."—ACTS XIX, 21, 22.

IN these Scriptures we have the theory and the practice; how did it work in the speaker's case?

We may name our subject PROVIDENCE THROUGH DISASTER.

Introductory.

When this theme first took hold on the writer, he was specially encouraged to discuss it by Bishop McCabe and the late Dr. Mendenhall, editor of the *Methodist Review*. After preaching on the subject, words of sincere appreciation came from eminent men like Professor L. D. McCabe and a distinguished writer and preacher of the Methodist

Episcopal Church, South, as well as equally meritorious toilers who are not conspicuous.

We trust a still higher motive leads to the publication of the sermon. To present fine workmanship in preaching may be to fail; far better to help men, if need be, through defective sermonizing.

I. Divine Providence is too vast and serious for us to prate about as if we knew. Who could trust to it were it within our narrow comprehension?

It may help a very little to say that there are two kinds of Providence, Active and Permissive. In the one, God is cause and executor; in the other He permits.

1. This latter recognizes the reign of law as a method of Divine Providence.

It also provides for freedom of choice in moral beings.

This once more confronts the problem of evil, unavoidable and unsolved from our side of it. To exist at all it must be under Divine permission if God be God.

2. Active Providence seems clearer to us. Human will determines, and, by the use of intelligence, causes things to come to pass. The late Dr.

Stevens, Methodist historian, in a personal letter, advised, "Trust in Divine Providence, and count yourself one link in the chain."

God, with infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, however, does and must actively provide.

Here his child is again dazed. The greatest and choicest of men have debated about foreknowledge, foreordination, and fatalism, with a positiveness only becoming Omniscience, but with confusion in logic from which, in practice, they have fallen back into obedience and brotherhood.

Long ago Moses footed it up, when he said, "Secret things belong unto Jehovah, our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever."

II. Divine Providence is plainly not a process of coddling calculated to produce overgrown babes or weaklings. We err in teaching or acting upon that supposition. The word "Providential" is flippantly tossed about in conversation and in comment on current events. It is heard in the pulpit, and repeated in print, to the confusion of young and old, because untrue. It is not the equivalent of made easy.

The keenest blade and the purest gold come through fire. Men of the type of Moses and Eli-

jah, of Joshua and Gideon, of Daniel and Paul, come up through great tribulation. It must be so, my reader, with you and me. Map out life, draw a line across the years; put the delights on one side, and the afflictions on the other, the latter have been the most fruitful.

It is comparatively easy, both in and out of the pulpit, to recite

> "Right is right, since God is God,
> And Right the day must win;
> To doubt would be disloyalty,
> To falter would be sin."

This morning I woke to see a face look out of a picture with a latent smile. Why should that boy of twelve, so finely organized and rarely gifted, consecrated in childhood, have been drowned in the Mississippi River? Near by, from another frame on the wall, there look out at me the large, serious eyes of Bishop Thoburn; they speak of millions to be won from heathenism by his ministry. It is not easy to set aside the sorrow of the contrast by quoting a stanza or a Scripture passage. The late Dr. Russel B. Pope said to me, "In my bereavement it only added agony to grief, when condolence was pressed upon me." Long ago Job said, "Miserable comforters are ye all."

Our hero, Paul, in a catalogue of his afflictions, used the word "perils" eight successive times while approaching the declaration, "If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things that concern my weakness."

This journey from Ephesus to Rome could then be made in sailing vessels in a month's time; it took five years, two of them spent in prison at Cæsarea. His imprisonment in Rome, most likely, destroyed his prospect of seeing Spain. The experience of those five years illustrates our theme in concrete form, PROVIDENCE THROUGH DISASTER.

Were we to choose a favorite subject of Divine Providence, here is the man; naturally so gifted as to loom above men like Mont Blanc above the Alps. Commissioned with a Divine message to all the world, an "ambassador" from heaven, why should he not be attended by an angelic body-guard, "and the stars in their courses fight for him?" Where a chosen vessel like this man with a heavenly treasure says, "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice beaten with rods; once stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day in the deep;

in journeyings often; in peril of waters, perils of robbers, perils by my countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren; weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger and thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness; beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches,"—in view of this, we must revise any theories of a coddling Providence, and readjust our lives or go down under calamity.

PROVIDENCE ALSO TAKES TIME. It required three years in the school of the Master for the twelve apostles; five years for this journey to Rome; forty years for Moses in the wilderness; over four hundred years for Abraham's posterity in Egypt; fourteen centuries from the Lamb on the altar in the Tabernacle to the one on Calvary. In the visions of the Apocalypse, those slain for the word of God are heard crying, "How long, O Lord, dost Thou not avenge our blood?"

I. HO FOR ROME!

Though no amateur traveler, he was prepared to see and appreciate the great, attractive mistress of the world, but his ambitions rose above that, for fruit and fellowship.

He mapped out his route definitely by way of Macedonia, Achaia, and Greece; then Jerusalem, and after that Rome.

1. Had he looked backward, he might have seen how very uncertain are human plans. At Damascus gate, long ago, all his ambitions and religious views went down when he was, possibly, unhorsed and blinded.

2. Instead of Jerusalem, he must go to Arabia for three years.

3. Then he escaped by a wall at night in a basket, as he faced the world.

4. His hopes of preaching in Jerusalem were snuffed out by an order, "Far hence to the Gentiles."

5. Barnabas, who sought him out for work in Antioch, broke with him in a dispute over his own nephew, Mark.

6. Worshiped at Lystra for Mercury, he was left for dead at Iconium.

7. He planned a visit. Every door in Asia was shut by the Divine Hand, except Macedonia.

8. After having planted the Gospel in Europe at Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Athens, coming at last to Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia, he saw the books of sorcery burned and idolatrous

shrines falling out of market. In that noonday sunlight lurks the tempest.

II. Having seen all these disappointments, he plans to go to Rome.

There were at least nine crashes in his plan of travel before he reached the end.

1. The mob at Ephesus, more dangerous than a thousand savage beasts, crying for two hours, "Great is Diana," destroyed an orderly journey to Macedonia. He was driven out by this insane mob.

2. He was finally hurried out of Greece in a roundabout way, northward through Philippi, to escape a plot of murder.

3. Continuing his speech till after midnight at Troas, a young man slept under his preaching, as hearers do now, mingling the farewell with a tragedy.

4. His good-bye at Miletus, by the mouth of the Meander, was a scene of strong men weeping their final farewell. Timothy, likely, led off in the heart-break. From Rome Paul wrote, "remembering thy tears."

5. At Cæsarea, "What mean ye to weep and break my heart?" "I am willing to be bound." Apprehension is very heavy baggage for a traveler.

6. In the sacred temple devoutly accomplishing his vow, taken in order to conciliate the Jew, he suddenly found himself the center of a wild, murderous mob, and snatched from their midst by the Roman Guard. Surely going to Rome was no pleasure journey.

7. Spirited away by night with a body-guard of four hundred and seventy troops, he was carried down to Cæsarea, where two years was taken out of the center of life. Going to Rome was no speedy journey.

8. In a stormy voyage, driven up and down in Adria, shipwrecked on the coast of a barbarous island, where the winter is spent.

9. By smoother sailing and over a hundred miles on foot, a manacled prisoner from an outlook on the Appian Way, he at last sees Rome! Many a fine carriage passes this manacled traveler, grandest hero that ever entered the Imperial City.

Is this Divine Providence, or is it anarchy, abandonment, peril, and perdition? "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me," said the psalmist. "Let the day be blotted out when they said, A man-child is born," was the sentiment of Job. Shall we adopt the sad lines about "Nothingness?"

"Power walketh high, and Misery doth crawl;
Men wake and sleep, live, strive, regret,
Forget, and Love and hate and know it.
This specter saith, 'I wait:'
At last it beckons and they pass;
And still the red sands fall within the glass;
And still the shades around the dial sweep;
And still the water-clock doth weep,—
And this is all."

From this veil of darkness there rises a vision beyond all. In the path of the only begotten Son of God was the flight into Egypt while yet a babe. When a man, a mob drove him from home. Beyond that Gethsemane, desertion, scourging, and the final cry, "Lama sabachthani."

III. Have we not overlooked something in the journey to Rome? This is the man who deliberately asserts, "All things work together for good;" "More than conquerors through Christ;" "I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us." He never recanted. There were wrecks, but He was not wrecked; stormy seas, but He walked the crests of the waves; was retarded, but each delay contributed to the world's welfare.

We specify some of the triumphs of this journey. First among them note some of the *addresses*

he left to the world—addresses struck out by his misfortune.

1. Where is there anything in literature more heart-moving than his farewell address to the Ephesian elders on the seashore at Miletus, at the same time one of the most perfect models for pastoral fidelity and effective preaching on record? It came forth amid heart-break.

2. On the stairs of the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem see him beckon to the crowd with that manacled hand. Hark to the rich tones of the Hebrew tongue silencing the great throngs eager for his life. Rapidly he traces the history of God's people, inserting his own religious experience, until the hated name of the Nazarene breaks off the discourse in the wild shout of the mob; but they never could shout down that sermon which has lived on and will live through the centuries. Light can not be driven back.

3. This story he substantially repeated before King Agrippa, where he put his judges on trial before a Higher Tribunal, nor will his defense ever be surpassed.

4. In these addresses he *had an experience to tell.* He told it not for personal exhibition; self was lost in the great sweep of truth leading to the

world's salvation. Such preaching hides the preacher behind the Savior. No preacher can succeed not supported by personal experience.

5. He was not monotonous by repetition of the same method. In Antioch of Pisidia he swept down on his hearers through the history of God's dealings with the Israelites, showing their rejection of the Messias. At Lystra he approached through healing power, ministering to the physical ills of humanity; a method not out of place in modern times. It were often better to approach a hungry man through a loaf of bread, or a sick family with medicine, thus preparing the way for the soul's cure.

In the jail at Philippi, conviction was produced by midnight singing and prayer, and it must have been richer and better and more heroic than many a modern prayer-meeting, for it was emphasized by an earthquake and the salvation of jailer and family.

In Athens he approached a philosophic audience through their deities and poetic literature.

When taken from his refuge in the Tower of Antonia before the Sanhedrin, he split the audience by springing the question of the resurrection of the dead.

So great a master of the Gospel was he as

to train his guns according to the field instead of shooting on from old embrasures into nowhere. All real followers of Paul are "on the firing line." Measured by his sermons alone on the journey to Rome, the journey was a triumph.

7. Of one phase of his experience he was reticent. How much curiosity Biblical critics have shown in their determination to find out about that thorn in the flesh! Paul had too much self-respect to draw attention to his ailments, and we are left simply to the lesson of the sufficient grace of God, without knowing whether it was sore eyes, a crippled hand, or—who cares what? If among us a thousand times more attention were given to spiritual health we should be more respectable, rational, religious, and Pauline.

Second, had his journey to Rome been smooth and brief, we might not be enjoying the great Epistles furnished on the way.

1. How could the world dispense with the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, written it seems, while at Philippi on the itinerary? Therein the Church finds plans of financial success, which, if put in practice, would emancipate her from pauperism; and yet he gives us a sweep into the "third heavens."

2. From Corinth, during that journey, ema-

nated his letter to the Galatians. One sentence alone of that Epistle swept away the darkness from Martin Luther while climbing Pilate's stairs in Rome.

3. While still abiding at Corinth he wrote the greatest Epistle of the Bible, furnishing the key to the arch of Old and New Testament Scriptures, the Epistle to the Romans.

4. Incidentally Luke's description of Paul's heroic daring during the storm on the sea is astonishing for its perfect writing. Read that voyage, and wonder at the writer's skill, the man described, and his triumphant course over all the waves of disaster.

During the two years of confinement in his Roman prison were written the Epistles to Philemon, a very diamond of light; to the Colossians, of wider scope; and to the Ephesians, wider still, if not richer in religious tone. There he also wrote to his favorite Church at Philippi, his first in Europe, which needed no reproof and stood alone in ministering to his missionary necessities. After these come the letters to Titus and Timothy, without which we were robbed of the sunset glow of this great light.

Third, Great as the value of his addresses and Epistles to the world, a yet more important fact to him, and personally to every one of us, came out during this journey made up of wrecks.

The promise, "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY," so much doubted and obscured in many Christian lives, had remarkable emphasis in this journey to Rome.

1. If we look backward at his previous career, there were instances of Christ's personal manifestation. At Damascus gate He appeared above the brightness of the sun, saying, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." In Jerusalem afterwards, "I saw Him saying, I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." In Corinth Christ appeared to him in the night saying, "Fear not; no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; I have much people in this city."

2. On this forward journey in the Tower of Antonia, bruised, imprisoned, "the Lord Jesus stood by saying, As thou hast borne witness in Jerusalem, so also in Rome."

On the storm-tossed vessel he declares, "There stood by me this night God's angel, declaring, Thou shalt stand before Cæsar."

There was one more fulfillment of this promised presence, which may be ours as well as his.

We will not puzzle over the doubtful question as to whether there were two imprisonments. It seems clear that there were two trials. The first followed by acquittal, whether by release is left in doubt.

Let us attend that first trial. Behold the scene. The court-room was likely one of the great basilicas, rectangular in shape, open-roofed, except the galleries; the judge or prefect, at one end on an elevated seat. There were ten assessors to advise him, seated on either hand. The crowds of spectators, fond of cruel sensations, were railed off from the court and the prisoner. Paul stood in front of the judge, without attorney or witness. Who was that judge? If Cæsar had time and inclination to take the trouble, he could be there. If so, his name was Nero, guilty of the murder of Octavia, his first wife, for the sake of Poppæa, and also guilty of the blood of his mother. Fiddler and incendiary of Rome, he laid the burning of the city on the Christians; and here was a ringleader of them on trial for his life. If not there, the prefect was his man. It was a capital crime

to introduce a new religion. The Nubian lion was the executioner. He may have been near enough for his hungry whine, his angry growl, or the thunder of his roar to have reached the court-room.

Who was the prosecutor? Was it Tertullus, who had gone from Jerusalem to accuse him before Felix; or was it Alexander the coppersmith, whose oration had been shut off by the Ephesian mob five years ago? Paul says of him, "He did us much harm."

Where are Paul's friends? Scan the great crowds around the railing in the galleries. It is terribly lonesome when a man most needs friends, to find them all absent. Not a friendly face in all that throng. Where was Brother Demas? He was far away yonder in Thessalonica. Why did he go? Paul says, "Having loved this present world." He had no appetite for dangers of this kind. He has a great following in our time. He had been helper when Paul wrote from Rome to Colosse, and also to Philemon. His name is found among those sending salutations to the brethren. The love of this present world is an insidious disease. It was the incipient poison in the character of Judas Iscariot.

Brother Crescens is gone, pehaps on duty, to Galatia. It left a gap, however. Titus, on whom Paul had greatly leaned in managing benevolent collections and other ministries in the Church,—he was in far-away Dalmatia. Tychicus he had sent to Ephesus. Trophimus has been left sick at Miletus, where that heartbreaking farewell had occurred. "Only Luke is with me," he says. Possibly the beloved physician is needed to treat that thorn in the flesh, and to write up the wonderful story of the Acts of the Apostles.

"All forsook me and fled." Hail, Brother Paul! Every true minister and servant of God has felt that overwhelming sense of loneliness.

But hark! the prisoner speaks! Possibly he explains the religion of which he was accused. Alone, did I say? There was One who "stood by." The same as manifested Himself yonder in Corinth, and again in the Tower,—He is here in the court-room. Had their eyes been open to behold Him, they had fled in terror surpassing that of Belshazzar's feast. "Stood by, and strengthened me, that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Here is the secret of power in or out of the pulpit, which makes preaching

effective; or without it but mockery. The lion missed his meal: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." The scene resembles that of the fabled Phœnix, singing amid the fires kindled by her own wings, and rising in immoratality amid its flames. Preaching the Gospel there alone, confronted by Nero's court "delivered."

It was not far thence to the final event which himself describes: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." That great head fell by the stroke of the sword, to be exchanged for a crown of righteousness.

"All things work together for good to them that love God."

IV.

IN SPITE OF OPPOSERS.

"Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance [*fullness*]."—1 THESS. 1, 5.

I. PRELIMINARY.

1. Two preachers came to Thessalonica with the Gospel,—Paul and Silas. Even the apostles needed companionship. Christ sent out the seventy, two and two. For a long time, Asbury and his successors appointed a preacher in charge and a junior preacher. In our time we need assistant pastors and deaconesses. "One shall chase a thousand, but two put ten thousand to flight."

Fortunately, we have no photographs of Paul and his comrade thrust upon our attention. If so, we might be annoyed by some hint of self-consciousness. I am grateful to Paul for keeping silent about his ailment, further than to give its lesson of faith.

2 Where was it this Gospel came with power

and the Holy Spirit? If we go to the northwest corner of the Ægean Sea we shall find Salonica. The name of the city has been shorn of its first syllable by the Turk, characterized by Gladstone as the "Unspeakable Turk." It is next in population to Constantinople, a city of seventy-five thousand; a mixture of splendor and squalor, where are many ancient ruins, Cyclopean and Hellenic walls, and triumphal arches. Thither in our day, came Miss Stone from her long captivity under the banditti. There Paul and his companion found a synagogue. It was ever his habit to seek out the regular place of worship, as it was also of the Master; though they knew the worshipers had become dead formalists.

They also went to the fields and lanes to preach to the people. Necessity is upon us in our day to do the same; but that furnishes no warrant for discounting the house of God as the center of all religious activity and the harbor into which converts must be drawn.

II. We have in this text an epitome of "our Gospel."

1. It is "ours" in a vital sense, just as the Charter of Rights wrested from King John in the thirteenth century is the inheritance of every

British subject. As the Constitution of the United States is the possession of every American citizen, so, more pre-eminently and imperishably, is the Gospel preached at Thessalonica our Gospel.

2. In Paul's statement of the manner of its coming we see its living essentials. Like the transverse section of a gem, this statement reveals the grain. Cut a tree crosswise, and you reveal the manner of its growth and life. A transverse section of an apple-tree reveals its general plan from the root through the trunk, to the twig, into the very core of the apple itself.

III. *This text shows that our Gospel comes in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in assurance.*

1. It came in choice, external form. No literature is like that of the English Bible, surpassing even Shakespeare in shaping the language of the English-speaking world. This applies also to its Hebrew and its Greek originals.

Paul's use of the "Word" was more fundamental. It was equivalent to "*doctrine*." In this sense the Gospel came to Thessalonica as a presentation of the burden of the Old Testament Scriptures and their application and fulfillment in the person and mission of Christ. "For three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the

Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead." A fine model to the modern pulpit of masterly exposition and doctrinal preaching. We shall never get on without more continuous and vigorous use of the sword of the Spirit. The word which Paul found so effective is contained in the Bible from Genesis through the Apocalypse. It is as fundamental to our Gospel as are the ribs of the earth to its surface. We can depend upon it to abide while God's throne stands secure. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables."

2. "Not in word only, but in power" (dunamis). For the English word "power" there are at least a dozen senses. It may mean ability, authority, might; but Paul here uses the word which furnishes the root for dynamite. Possibly there was in his mind, as an illustration, that terrible force which, some years ago, tore away the barrier of New York harbor, known as Hell Gate; that which broke a tunnel through the Alps, and is soon to blast out another through the Sierra Nevadas; the same in principle as that which recently broke from Pelee, and on across continents and seas to Hawaii and the islands of the Indian Ocean;

the kind of power that shakes the earth from buried Caracas to Batoum in Russia.

It was but natural that this outward expression of power should be fresh in his mind. In Philippi, the last city where he had preached, for casting out a demon and so cutting off the graft of those who had great gain from the poor, possessed girl, he and Silas were scourged; in prison and at midnight, lying on their sore backs, with their feet in the stocks, they sang. A modern hymn would have fitted the case,—

> "And prisons would palaces prove,
> If Jesus should dwell with me there."

They were the happiest men in Philippi: "And the prisoners heard;" so did the Lord of the earthquake. The walls rock, the bolts fly back, and the prisoners might have escaped. The jailer, that night, made his escape from a stronger prison than such as inclosed the cells. When we behold the stripes of those prisoners washed, the jailer and his household rejoicing in spiritual freedom, dispensing hospitality to God's ambassadors, we need not deplore sudden conversion nor despair of that power which brings "deliverance to the captives."

It is this power which surpasses in moral greatness, that form which wheels the earth in its orbit and holds the sun, moon, and stars in their courses.

The power of habit is recognized in every sphere of human action. A bad habit may enchain a man hopelessly, a good habit may be as lasting as life and character; but the power of the Gospel can demolish habits as an explosion can wipe out a city block.

The human will is the mightiest part of a man. God himself will not destroy or compel that will within the sphere of personal choice. It can stand up before Sinai and Calvary, before death and eternity, in stolid defiance; or it can, by self-assertion, ally itself with the will of the Almighty. Here is the challenge of our Gospel in its ministry and its laity. We stand perplexed and amazed before the problems here encountered. But ever since at Thessalonica they "consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few, and turned the world upside down," has this power operated on human nature, until this day its conquests are as marked and more extensive, pervasive, and all-conquering than at any time in the

history of man. Lord give me, and the reader, and the Church this power.

3. "And in the Holy Spirit." Necessarily so. We must discriminate between the power and its Author, between the impersonal, effectual influence and the personal Holy Spirit. We may speak of the power as "it," but of the Spirit as "He."* It is impertinent in us to attempt to comprehend or expound the Trinity; but it is no more mysterious than the simplest flower or grain of sand. It is very assuring to know that the "Comforter is come;" "the Holy Ghost from heaven, the Father's promise given." In the sense of the Divine promise, He came upon the Pentecostal Church with the assurance, "He shall abide with you forever." He never withdrew from men. "He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment." "He bears witness with our spirit." "Through Him we cry, Abba, Father." Like a great three-cornered star, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three in one. He is the angle now immediately in touch with the world of mankind. This is His dispensation. Our Gospel, if it come at all in power, must come in the Holy Spirit. If I open my lungs, the air rushes in; if I open my eyes, the light floods my being: so

*Some say the Holy Spirit is the mother nature of God.

open we our souls to the Spirit of God, more ready than air or light to fill us to the uttermost. Hallelujah!

4. Need we finish this sermon outlined? Whether, we take the word "assurance," or the other "fullness," both are inevitable.

It is very comforting to be assured or insured in property, home, or family; but when the interests involved cover life and death, time and eternity, sin and righteousness, man and God, to be "assured" is heaven begun below. Poor indeed is that man who hath not found it. The Gospel means good tidings. To accept it is to have the "New Jerusalem descend out of heaven from God," and "our Father making His tabernacle with men."

We must not rob ourselves of the glorious prospect of a great hereafter toward which, it may be, our Christian fathers aspired too exclusively. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," and "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most pitiable." "To depart and be with Christ is far beter," but our Gospel brings heaven on earth and "good will toward men."

> "'T is a heaven below.
> My Redeemer to know."

The dying seer reports the truth as he declares: "The waters deepened; unawares, a presence and a voice! That presence moved beside me like a cloud of glory. That Voice was like a silver trumpet, saying, 'It is I. Fear not.' And whether now the waters were less deep, or I was borne on invisible arms, I know not. My mortal robes only brushed the smoothly gliding stream:

> "'And like the edges of a sunset cloud,
> The beatific land before me lay'."

"The earnest expectation" hath a *present,* a *continuous,* and a *complete fulfillment.*

V.

BY WAY OF THE JUNIPER-TREE.

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are."—JAMES V, 17.

"He came and sat down under a juniper-tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."—1 KINGS XIX, 4.

I. IT is said that a man is as strong as his weakest point. Doubted.

Here is the most conspicuous of all the prophets. We find him at the point of despair. He was so great as to furnish the pattern for Christ's immediate herald, John the Baptist. He stood on Mount Hermon as peer of Moses, the lawgiver. He was the man of storm, earthquake, and fire. If ever frail, it is here under the juniper.

But he was as strong as all his noblest qualities together. Man is not like a chain, only strong as its weakest link. In him all the links interact

and transfuse their strength even into the weakest one. Herein a man and a chain are different. "When I am weak, then am I strong," implies, "Where I am weak, there am I strong." Devil's Gate and Golden Gate are the danger-points for hostile fleets, being easy of entry. But defended by military art and naval prowess, they are as strong as the nation back of their equipment.

There is nothing in this swing of Elijah down to our lower level of human weakness to excuse failure; much less to gloat over or palliate our sins and peccadilloes. "They are all alike, they all do it," is a cowardly, villainous excuse, the betaking of a mean spirit to a hiding-place, after the manner of a prairie-dog to its den with rattlesnake society.

To those who have hard fighting—and there is plenty for all—it is consoling, stimulating, and inspiring to find men of the rank of Elijah under the juniper.

There is in life's desert a widely scattered grove of juniper-trees. Daniel Curry, editor and scholar, had the appearance of a lion-hearted, aggressive warrior. But if one went deep enough he would find a tender, humble, lovable spirit. On one occasion he went down amid ecclesiastical strife.

This was years before his death; but he was minded to retire, and expressed himself in a manner to show that he had found his juniper-tree. Professor Lacroix, who was a clear thinker and trenchant writer, passed prematurely away. Once he asked the writer, "Did you ever feel as if you would like to end your own life?" "No, I never had any fondness for a rope's end." "Then you do not know the meaning of life's trials." Have we not frequent side glimpses of our friends in humble sphere, when toil, pain, grief, obscurity, apparently endless and hopeless, has brought out the cry that burst from the lips of Elijah? This experience does not spare men of higher rank. Job cried, "O that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave!" Moses said, "Kill me out of hand, and let me not see my misery." Jonah prayed, "O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me." Paul had "a desire to depart." Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled, what shall I say?"

II. It may clear the way to note some questions that will unbidden assert themselves in the presence of Elijah, the Tishbite.

1. Is this chapter a myth, and the events mentioned only a parable in dramatic form?

If so, James is misleading. "Elias was a man

of like passions. He prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not. He prayed again, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Paul speaks of him as though writing biography when he inquires, "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel?"

Jesus declared, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months; unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, unto a woman that was a widow." All these allusions are in the form of biography.

But were these references, and the entire history, only intended to dramatize the moral involved, their practical value would remain. The living truth would demand our allegiance. We therefore propose no dispute, but that *obedience* which, earnest and honest, will lead to the same end.

The wonder is that the startling events of the narrative produced so little astonishment and wonder in the minds of writers and eye-witnesses of the events.

2. Another incidental feature of this story was well stated by a banker after hearing this sermon. "Was not Elijah a sort of a wild man, a hermit

after the order of the modern Arab, and so removed from the experiences and rules governing our times?"

His outer surroundings were exceptional; his appearance and life habits singular, even in that day. But human nature and its experiences are continuous, like wind, water, heat, and cold. So sin and sorrow, love and hate, make us all akin. In this there is "nothing new under the sun." "He was a man subject to like passions as we are."

III. The following is the outline of our plan of discussion: 1. Where do we find the prophet? 2. How came he there? 3. How did he get on from that place?

1. In the wilderness south of Judea, toward Egypt, is an arid country covered with sand and gravel. The beds of its shallow streams are dry for most of the year. It is sprinkled with very scant vegetation. Possibly in some future day it may blossom and bear fruit, but not while under the dominion of Arab or Turk.

The juniper-tree is unlike our northern strong-trunked, green-headed shade-tree. This Rothem or broom-tree grows in several branches from a common root, seldom much over a dozen feet in height. Its leaves are narrow and in the spring-

time it puts forth a delicate flower of a pale color, streaked with purple, charged with sweet fragrance. If then in bloom, the prophet was not likely in any mood to enjoy the fragrance. The shade is the best afforded by the desert. He had gone a day's journey into it, and had possibly traveled for a couple of nights as a fugitive from the vengeance of Jezebel. It was likely the heat of the day when he sat down under the poor shadow.

Look at the man. He is wearied, afoot and alone. To the men of Ahab and his kind are the chariots and horseback. Elijah's equipment is his sheepskin mantle, good for cover or pillow, a girdle for his loose tunic, a turban, and sandals. He is a "hairy man." Prophets wore their hair and beard uncut; not filthy or untidy, for all the ordinances of the worship of his forefathers and of men in sacred offices required scrupulous and immaculate cleanliness.

He was doubtless lithe of form. Two days ago he had girded up his loins and run sixteen miles before Ahab's chariot from Carmel to Jezreel.

What of his countenance? This is usually carved by the inner spirit and habits of life. His parents may have named him Elijah, meaning

Jehovah is my God. Or he may have won the name by his life habit of facing Jehovah. This would stamp his features with moral grandeur.

Now there is a cloud on that face. His lips move in prayer. Hark! "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life." One feels like withdrawing from the privacy of this agonized soul. This man prayed less than four years ago, and the heavens ceased to send their rain. Then three days ago he prayed seven times, and there came the little cloud, the gathering storm, the rush and roar of the deluge of rain. He prays again now. Shall we behold the death-shadows gather over his face and stamp these features in the calmness of death, while the spirit is escorted home to its eternal rest? Nothing of the sort. God is our Father, and is too good. He can say *no* at the right time! This is no place to quit, no time to muster out; there is work ahead and the best of life yet to live, with Horeb and a chariot of fire on beyond. God be praised.

2. What brought him there? Were we to count all the steps from the time he arraigned the two great sins of Israel, calf worship and Baal worship, then on through his flight to the cave

by the brook Cherith, the escape to Zarephath, the meeting with Ahab, the challenge to a contest on Mt. Carmel, the revival and the reform, followed by reaction, then the retreat to the wilderness, we should find there were twenty steps downward to this last one into despondency, despair of the cause, and longing to die.

It was a long slide in three days from the glory of a flamelit mountain-top and the shouting hosts of people, down to despondency under the juniper in the desert.

A few of the causes of discouragement it may be profitable to mention.

(1.) All the punishment inflicted upon the sinful nation, in the form of drought, hunger, and pestilence, seemed to have failed in bettering their condition, and he himself had been the instrument in the hands of God in bringing these scourges down upon the people, who only grew worse under their afflictions.

(2.) Akin to this had been the dreadful scene at the river Kishon, whose waters ran red with the blood of at least four hundred false prophets. Was he justified in ordering their slaughter? Not of his own choice. He was but the executive of

Divine law, which required the death penalty for such sinners. This, however, had seemed a useless slaughter.

(3.) Before the slaughter of the prophets of Baal there had been a destruction of the prophets of Jehovah. Even the one hundred hid by faithful Obadiah in a cave had dropped out of sight. Elijah seemed to be alone. Where are his friends now, "when a friend in need is a friend indeed?" All servants of God find occasions when they seem to be abandoned. They wonder where their friends are hid, and why they do not speak out in time of trial. Elijah had left his servant behind. There was no raven to disturb the silence, not even a dog to look his pity.

(4.) "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a broken spirit, who can bear?"

He was tired, hungry, suffering reaction from great excitement and sleepless nights. These were the lesser causes for discouragement. The revival was passed as suddenly as it came. The reform had miscarried. The election was a defeat. A fickle Church and nation from shouting, "The Lord, He is God!" had been overcome by the resolute will of a wicked queen and a weak king. Elijah had to flee from the great rain, the

gates of Jezreel, to the desert, the scrawny juniper, and wanted to give up and die.

Look out when the election goes wrong; when trusted officers betray, the public conscience becomes chilled. There is danger in the situation. The great William Morley Punshon, nearing death, said, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But he could add, "Since they are Thy waves and Thy billows, blessed be Thy name." Rumor has it—we hope it is only gossip—that Czar Nicholas, under his measureless responsibility, has contemplated suicide. We are never beyond His depths, Who cried, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

3. How did he escape? We are too familiar with the way to the juniper. We should be more familiar with the paths of escape. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape."

(1.) He slept. The great English poet says:

"Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

The great Hebrew psalmist surpasses that in his declaration, "So He giveth His beloved

sleep;" like unto the loving mother's lullaby, "Lie still, and slumber." The nightly curtain is drawn between the light of day and the world's bed-chamber. Not for the purpose of reveling and crime, but for rest, recuperation, and repose in God. That pillowed head in the hinder part of the ship, after an exhausting day, brings the Lord of the seas very close to His brotherhood of tired humanity. This was Elijah's first preparatory step of escape.

(2.) He needed food and was furnished. There was no raven in the sky, no exhausting meal-barrel near at hand, nor was there any manna falling from heaven, as had been granted to Israel in that wilderness long ago. Yet "give us this day our daily bread" has always been the Divine order. There were myriads of angels at call, or the no less wonderful laws of nature to be harnessed up. He awoke when the angel touched him, inviting him to arise and eat. "He looked, and, behold, a cake baken on the coals and a cruse of water at his head, and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." He may or may not have slept again; but "the angel of the Lord came the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is

too great for thee." Thus he was amply fed for his journey, and, whether it was in the food or in the man, God has a thousand ways to provide that it last. "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God." Thus it happened to Moses when necessary, and to the Son of man when called to stand for his brethren in their temptation through the flesh by Satan.

We may vainly imagine that it was a peculiar favor to feed on manna in the wilderness, or share in the five loaves and two small fishes on the shores of Galilee. Our daily bread comes in a more wonderful manner, and brings to us a thousand-fold more daily evidences of the goodness of God. We sow the grain; the sun and the clouds join with yet more mysterious laws, and these in turn are helped by human skill to bring to us our food. This is surrounded by flesh and fruit, and all the outfit of our richly furnished tables from all lands. Were I to chose between the manna and the grain, I should prefer the latter as more marvelous and eloquent as a reminder of the goodness of God. Where shall this Divine revelation to us have an end? We have blundered on until electricity has

become our servant, furnishing us with light and fuel and power. We are beginning to burn the atmosphere as fuel, and ride upon the wings of the wind. How dare we be irreverent, unthankful, and unbelieving amid ten thousand voices from all directions?

(3.) The way from under the juniper-tree led to Mt. Horeb, a memorable sanctuary associated with the covenant, the giving of the law, the erection of the tabernacle, and a well-ordered form of worship. Thither Elijah must betake himself for communion with God under solitary and sublime conditions. Poor, indeed, is that life which is not marked by sacred places, where the pilgrim has met with God alone. We must have some Jabbok's ford, or Mt. Horeb, or Joppa housetop, or Hermon's heights, or quiet beneath the night sky. From such hallowed places men can go down again to grapple with devil-possessed plains.

(4.) Nor could he be recovered and equipped for what was yet before him until he "entered into his closet and prayed to God in secret." His closet was Horeb's cave. That of Job Ledbetter, in Portsmouth, Ohio, was the garret under the roof of the flouring-mill. That of my father was beneath an apple-tree shadowed by the twilight.

Where is yours, and where mine?—for we must have them or fail.

(5.) God spake to Elijah thrice:

First. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He must unburden his heart. He never had been permitted to tell his troubles to a wife, for he had none. Why do not men constantly share their mental burdens with their wives? They are generally more trustworthy and wiser than they have credit for. There was no brother at hand to whom he might tell his experience. The class-meeting is well founded and furnishes great opportunity to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. But God's ear is ever open to our cry.

Listen to the testimony of Elijah: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." That is true. "For the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword." That is true, Elijah. "And I, I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." The latter part of that is true, Elijah, but the first is not. Do not imagine that you are the only good man alive. That is a very common mistake made both by sincere and by hypocritical people. It is a bad symptom when a man imagines that the king-

dom of heaven has been narrowed down to one man's soul, or even to the limits of his religious denomination.

After the Lord had spoken through the triple display of wind, earthquake, and fire, He repeats the same question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He then disabuses Elijah's mind, showing him that there are more than seven thousand which have not bowed unto Baal.

Second. A second time the Lord speaks: "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." "A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord." Here is something to be desired on the part of Elijah, a power whereby to sweep through the forests of evil men with destruction. Elijah, thou art my brother. Do not I often long for tempests of Divine wrath to sweep out the evils of society with all their promoters, and make an end of it suddenly? But "the Lord was not in the wind." There came a cyclone across the city of Louisville, Ky., destroying the dwellings, in whole or in part, of ten thousand people. One after another of those who had escaped declared, "I promised God last night if He permitted me to live, I should serve Him to the best of my ability the remainder

of life." I did not know one of them to keep that promise. God was not in the wind. Men are not spiritually healed in that way. "Through nature up to nature's God" fails. "Ye must be born of the Spirit."

The Lord exhibits another sample of power: "After the wind, an earthquake." What is more heart-sickening than to see church-spires and chimney-tops twisting off, and feel the shiver in the earth as though about to go to pieces under one, and the foundations giving way? Yet "the Lord was not in the earthquake." We should enjoy with Elijah the power to shake men out of their wickedness by tumbling down their walls, behind which their crimes against God and men are perpetrated. We should like to hear them cry out for pity. But if saints were created in that way, surely the West Indies, South America, Italy, and the Sandwich Islands would blossom and bloom with the fairest harvest of Christianity on the face of the earth, for they are most frequently alarmed by earthquake.

The Lord displays a third symbol of His power: "After the earthquake, a fire." Ah! Elijah, here is thy favorite element of power. The fire came down on Mt. Carmel and burnt up thy sacrifice,

and after this, at thy beck and call, thine enemies were consumed by fire, and for thine ascent came horses of fire and a chariot of fire. Here, now, as in the time of Moses, Horeb is once more wrapped in a "garment of fire." Dost thou expect healing of spirit for thyself or the salvation of sinners through the vengeance of fire, with which "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up?" "The Lord was not in the fire." One could wish that lightning might fall from heaven, or fire spring up amid the poisonous gases of the dens of iniquity, and burn out every saloon and gambling-hell now destroying mankind. But this is not God's way of salvation.

Once more the Lord speaks: "After the fire, a still, small voice." "And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave." "And, behold, a voice, What doest thou here, Elijah?" He repeats the story of his troubles as before, but finds wherein he is mistaken. There are many good people in Israel, and his main life work lies yet before him. It is a striking spectacle when he wraps his face in his mantle, and stands in the entering in of the cave.

"Sweeter far the still, small voice,
Unheard by human ear,
That makes the broken heart rejoice,
And dries the bitter tear."

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."

There is no successful reformation without revivals, and there can be no revival independently of the still, small voice, convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This made the Pentecostal revival and all its true successors possible under Wesley or Moody, in Wales or India.

IV. From this climax in his triumph over discouragement, take a glance forward before he fades out of sight.

1. The first great fact, he must return to duty. "The Lord said, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus." That word "Go" is forever the Lord's command to His Church.

There were some reforms to be accomplished. Hazael was to be made king over Syria, and Jehu king over Israel. Nor has the Lord yet discharged the successors of the prophets, Christian ministers, from the duty of overturning bad civil rulers, and securing in their place men faithful to the laws and the well-being of society.

A gratifying commission was the anointing of a successor in the person of Elisha. Let Elijah not be uneasy lest the cause die with him. It is God's way that the prophets should have a succession till the end of time. And those successors, as in Elijah's case, will surpass the fathers in influence, and possibly in tactful wisdom. This rugged head of the prophetic school was to found schools of the prophets. The successors of those schools yonder at Boston, Drew, and Garrett, not to speak of others throughout the land, are no less valuable in our day than were those at Gilgal and Bethel. "Faith of our fathers, living still."

The best period of Elijah's life lies before him, between Mt. Horeb and the plains of Jordan, with its fiery chariot. *To fix the age-limit by the calendar draws the line where God Himself does not.*

2. Let us go forward a little further to the day of his departure. His work is done; Elisha will not be turned back; they cross the Jordan, the students from the school of the prophets watching them as they go. A startling apparition: Whose steeds are these? What chariot, and whence? Such was never driven by Ahab or King Solomon. And this whirlwind of fire! Elijah goes up; he does not die. His mantle falls back for Elisha,

whereby to separate Jordan's symbol of official power. O, Elijah, what if God had granted thy request under yon juniper-tree! Then where had been thy life's best chapter? Where the schools of the prophets, and their successors, to carry out the Divine commission for the change of kings in Syria and Israel?

God knows best where life should end, and how. This thou hast known these three thousand years in glory.

3. We must have one more glimpse of thee on earth. Nine hundred years later there is a night-scene on another mountain-top, Hermon's lonely heights. There are three men dazed by an awful light, shining through the cloud of glory upon the Son of man, who had gone there to pray, and as He prayed His countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and His garments were white as light. Thither came the giver of the law in the person of Moses, who had been fourteen hundred years with God. And here art thou, Elijah. How glad we are to know that, though Moses was buried by angels, and thou, Elijah, carried up in a whirlwind of fire, still the *dead are alive for evermore.* But behold the three talking together, Moses and Elias, with Jesus. What is the theme?

Is it Egypt, Pharaoh, the Red Sea, the burning bush, the thunder of Sinai, the burial from Nebo's lonely height? Not that. With thee, Elijah. Is it the ravens and the brook Cherith, or Sarepta, or Carmel's fire, or the sad juniper-tree, or Mount Horeb with its triple coat of wind, earthquake, and fire? Is it the separation of the Jordan? Is it chariot or whirlwind of fire? None of these. What can it be that should interest such a conference representing law and prophecy? We are glad we know that it was something greater, to which all these pointed, "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" for they speak "concerning the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." The council broke, the disciples went down with Jesus to the foot of the mountain to find their work in devil-possessed humanity, beginning with the boy. But thou hast taught us, by the sorrows of the juniper-tree, to "wait for the earnest expectation."

VI.

THROUGH THE GREAT ECLIPSE!

"From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."—MATT. XXVII, 45.
"He said, It is finished, and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."—JOHN XIX, 30.

I. THIS morning, August 30, 1905, a belt of the earth, nearly one hundred and seventy miles wide, and one thousand miles long, saw an eclipse of the sun, continuing from five o'clock to 8.30.

On the American Continent, this belt of totality lay between Hudson Bay and Newfoundland. The entire belt was 4,000 miles wide, and from my home near the 40th parallel I saw the lower left rim apparently bitten out of the sun by what, in China, would have been a dragon. The fowls were unusually silent, and the crickets were less noisy. But at 8.30 the last black fringe passed from the face of the sun.

II. It was a suggestive event for at the same time, yonder at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the

eclipse of war was being caused to pass off the face of Asia, and the brightness which broke over Bethlehem's heights long ago in the angel song, "Peace on earth to men of good will," burst over the world, and Bethlehem's Star settled on Manchuria.

III. Three shocks of an earthquake shook the walls of the building in which the treaty was made yesterday.

IV. Nineteen hundred and seventy-two years ago the greatest eclipse between the loss of Eden and the Judgment-day happened at Mount Calvary, when, for three hours, darkness was upon the face of the earth, and Jesus cried, "It is finished."

How extensive the shadow is uncertain; but it was wide enough to make the needed impression. It was not an eclipse in the order of astronomy. The moon was full, and therefore out of the earth's orbit, so that the sun could shine directly in the moon's face. An ordinary eclipse was impossible.

An earthquake soon followed the death of Jesus. A hazy darkness often precedes and accompanies an earthquake. This fact detracts nothing from, but rather adds to, the impressiveness of the darkness which settled upon the greatest crime in human

history. Even the Roman soldier cried out from his standpoint, "Truly this was a son of God."

V. There was another eclipse on the cross, which settled upon the face of Jesus. That strange shadow, Death, fell upon His features, as it surely will upon every human countenance, and has fallen since the time it settled upon the face of Abel through the unnumbered myriads of mankind, and will until "there shall be no more death."

The eclipse of death remained upon the face of Jesus till the morning of the third day, when it passed away forever.

He is the Son of man, our Elder Brother, who "tasted death for every man," and forever fixed it that the eclipse of death will also pass from every human face in the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. Alas! that it should be in vain for any who will not obey the Light, but "hold down the truth in unrighteousness, and change the truth of God into a lie." Those who are changed into the likeness of His image "shall be like Him, and see Him as he is."

As the shadow passes to-day from the sun; as the darkness passed from Calvary; so the shadow of Death shall pass from the redeemed world.

The great central event in human history was

announced when Jesus cried, "It is finished." Matthew says, He "cried with a loud voice;" John reports the words He spake. It was not a dying wail, but the shout of victory.

Though an eclipse, it is the focal moral light of history, human and Divine, in this world.

1. The physical agony of Jesus was *finished.* In this He comes very near to our human nature. My dear friend was nigh unto death in California, but, when recalled to life, declared his greatest regret was the agony of recovery. It frequently occurs that the departing saint will say, "Why did you bring me back to life and its agony again?" With Jesus, the torture of the cruelest type invented by savage ingenuity, the cross—the nails driven into nerve and bone, the horrible thirst, with the six dreadful hours—was over when He said, "It is finished." He led the way to where there shall be "no more pain."

2. The *spiritual* agony was immeasurably greater than the physical. A brutal man would have endured the torture of crucifixion with calmness, or even defiance, impossible to the physical delicacy belonging to a fine organization. The two thieves outlived Him.

Jesus suffered by *anticipation:* "I have a bap-

tism to be baptized with, but how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He endured the crucifixion a long time before it came.

The agony of Gethsemane is incomprehensible. The wife of a coarse, cruel husband, whose sons were disgracing her, and whose beloved daughter had died, said to me, "O I shall die with agony!" It was some help to quote to her the Savior's language, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

3. Beyond the blasphemy of Jew and Roman, the buffeting of brutal hands, the thorns and the scourge with its loaded lash; beyond the nails and the fever in the wounds, the thirst and heat, as He "trod the winepress alone," was the agony echoing in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Then He drank the bitterest dregs of the cup which might not pass; then He tasted death in its most awful significance—alienation, abandonment, hell. None but a Divine Savior could proclaim over such woe, "It is finished." This opens the gate for the "Earnest Expectation."

4. A long line of *prophecy* was finished.

(1.) "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." "A prophet like unto me shall the Lord raise up unto thee," said Moses. "There

shall come forth a Star out of Jacob," said Balaam. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," said Isaiah. "The Lord will suddenly come to His temple," said Malachi. "There cometh One after me," said the Baptist.

Here under the shadows of an eclipse, this cry, "It is finished," ends the prophetic line of those who foretold.

(2.) If that line extend at all from Calvary down the future, its authority springs from Him who "finished" His work. It behooves us to heed His warning. "Many shall come in My name"—false prophets; "but go ye not after them."

5. The main line is yet to be traced.

The scarlet thread of sacrifice for sin was changed to the golden thread of salvation, extending onward into heaven, when He cried, "It is finished."

Before this preacher had a pulpit, he was seated in a farmhouse with only Clarke's Commentary for a help, aided by the chronology of Ussher, which, however uncertain, served its purpose. The line of bloody sacrifice fell into periods of about four centuries each.

(1.) Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice

than Cain; there was doubtless a lamb which bled, and, though acceptable to God, it was not "finished."

(2.) Leaping over some four times four centuries, during which period so corrupt became the human race that God sent a flood, and only Noah and his family were left; but it was not "finished," for on the new-washed world Noah erected his altar and laid upon it a bleeding lamb, pointing forward, as we now see, to Calvary.

(3.) There followed about four hundred years more, when Abraham made his covenant, and sealed it with bloody sacrifice, showing that it was not "finished."

(4.) The father of the faithful continued his wanderings, and his children followed, through the times of Isaac and Jacob to Moses, four or five hundred years, when the Lord ordered a tabernacle, with its priesthood, its laws; but its victims bled, the lamb of sacrifice still pointing onward, showing that it was not "finished." The Lord takes time; "with Him a thousand years is as one day."

(5.) The chosen seed settled in Canaan, and, after some five hundred years more, a temple was built on Mount Zion, whose costly splendor rivaled that of the sun. Its ritual, its four hundred

singers, with Levite and priest and millions of worshipers thronging the religious capital of the earth, looked as though complete; but all was imperfect. It was as bloody as it was glorious, for all was not "finished."

(6.) That temple was swept away in the wrath of God, and for seventy years Israel was in captivity. Being restored, the house was rebuilt, and the service re-established with the blood of the lamb prominent over all. This continued some five hundred years, until, 1,972 years ago, at nine o'clock, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" was sacrificed for the sins of the world. The darkness fell, the earthquake came, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom on yonder Zion's hill. The priest then ministering received his discharge forever; for on Calvary, outside of the city, the Lamb of God shouted His victorious cry, "It is finished."

The eclipse broke away from over the world, and there "remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

"We have an High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" we need no other. It is our privilege to point sinners to Him. A beautiful incident occurred in my first pastorate in the city where this sermon is written. The morning

theme had been, "It is finished;" in the evening the penitent form was surrounded with inquirers. I overheard a venerable saint consoling one of the inquirers by quoting the text of the morning, saying, "Remember, it is finished:" what better could we do than sing,

> "Let the water and the blood
> From Thy wounded side which flowed
> Be of sin the double cure,—
> Save from wrath and make me pure."

That cry under that eclipse is the center of the Divine government in this world.

(7.) We have shown that the altars of sacrifice from Eden to Calvary found their interpretation in the Lamb of God. Outside of the chosen people, the same truth applies to the human family. Where is there a land in which men are not conscious of sin and needed redemption? Do not the African tribes, the Hindus, the Brahmins, the Buddhists, savage and civilized, long for reconciliation to their offended deities, offering "the fruit of the body or the blood of the flock for the sin of the soul?" There is but time to mention this wide field of thought. Every altar with its victim, in all lands and all ages, points to Calvary.

(8.) When we cast the forward look across the boundary of our own brief life, across that of the generation now living, and those to follow through the unlimited centuries before the "world, with the works that are therein, shall be burned up, and the heavens pass with a great noise," and the judgment shall have passed down though the endless cycles of eternity, the most prominent spectacle and significant event must continue to be that day of eclipse and that cry of victory, "It is finished."

These are glorious outlines of the "earnest expectation of the creation, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God."

VII.

THROUGH THE WRATH OF THE LAMB.

"Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb."—REV. VI, 16.

THE fuller passage is, "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the *wrath of the Lamb:* for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

I wish I and my readers might have heard Dr. John P. Durbin give utterance in his matchless way to this cry: "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." I never heard him preach that sermon, but have heard great preachers allude to it.

We find in this scene a dark phase of the *"Earnest Expectation"* running through these discourses.

To be subjected to malevolent power is a fearful thing; but when benevolence is changed to wrath, it is frightful.

This is not out of harmony with the cautious, and possibly patronizing, concession that "there is a power in the universe which makes for righteousness." That seems a long way round to avoid the word God.

Nature teaches this lesson very plainly in her mute way.

I. The material world is loaded with forces calculated to make human life happy, but which, under what seem to be abnormal conditions, or even normal, become frightfully ruinous. Glycerine and nitrogen, each genial and serviceable, become, when differently combined, like love changed to hate.

In the vegetable world, what is more delicious than the juices of early sweet-corn? But when turned to poison, scarcely anything is more deadly. And whence come the frightful wrecks of manhood, womanhood, childhood, home, and country, but from the beneficent qualities of the hop, the

grape, and the grain turned into "liquid fire and distilled damnation?"

II. How self-evident is the same law operating in our human relations.

1. Often are the sweetest of personal friendships turned into the bitterest hostility. In the long course of history, royal families have disgraced the human race by family rivalries and murder, nor has this departed from the family circle in our more enlightened times. Scarcely any of us but have had occasion to say, "I do well to be angry." Where is there more desperate hate than between those whose affianced love has been of the warmest? What righteous indignation is awakened by the scenes of divorce courts!

2. I have never been able to forget the expression on the face of a mother as she pursued her own disobedient daughter fleeing into the face of the coming storm. It was an apocalypse of the possibilities of maternal love acting as wrath.

3. There is a story told by a celebrated preacher, who gave it as within his own acquaintance. A man of some wealth, who lived in the South, sent his son to a Northern university, abundantly supplying more than enough money for expenses. The son became dissipated, imperious

in his demands for more money, blighted his father's hopes, wore out his patience, and when at home, meeting his father one day in the street, brutally struck him. The father went alone to a near-by forest, and there was heard to utter three agonizing shrieks; then deliberately returned, and, finding his son, drove him from his door, ordering him to be gone, declaring, "You are no longer my son." What a fearful echo from that scene described by the Divine Savior,—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

III. From these near-by and feebler hints, showing how love may work as wrath, turn we to the setting of our text. First glance at the vision itself. As the Lamb before the throne opened the seals, there appeared a succession of symbolic horses; the white representing purity; the red, the sanguine experiences of humanity; the black representing judgment; the pale horse of death; then the scene of our text is thrust into the procession, the "souls under the altar crying, How long, O Lord, dost Thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Then the sixth seal is opened. There comes a great earthquake; the sun becomes black as sack-

cloth of hair, and the moon as blood; the stars fall to the earth as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when shaken by a mighty wind; the heaven departed as a scroll; every mountain and island was moved out of its place; men of all classes called for "rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb."

There is no incongruity, as may appear at first sight, in the "wrath of the Lamb."

The Lamb is the symbol of innocence as well as of sacrifice for the sins of others. The idea of blood atonement for sin is as wide as the human conscience, and the sense of guilt afflicting the race everywhere, in savage and civilized peoples. Victims of some kind have bled and burned on altars erected by men to appease the wrath of their gods, whether dimly or clearly apprehended. This was the chosen emblem for the Hebrew, and terminated in "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

There seems almost an absurdity when the Lamb is introduced in this Book of Revelation as receiving the roll with its seven seals, and proceeding to open them; but this closing volume of the Bible was not designed for an orderly portrait gallery. It seems to be a revelation of the

far-reaching principles or elements of the Divine government as they apply to all human history in all times.

The Lamb of God, therefore, appears before us in this vision as God's *offering* for sin, the embodiment of gentleness and love, the *Revealer* of the Divine mind to men, as well as the *Judge* over *all, blessed for evermore.*

IV. So far we have purposely omitted any discussion of theories of interpretation as applied to this book. Great has been the mystification perpetrated on the world by theorists. We hope to avoid the addition of any slightest fleck of dimness.

1. One method may be called the chronological, which attempts to lay out the Apocalypse in historical sections, describing when this and that scene was fulfilled, and in so far ended and relegated to the past. This, however, breaks down and is unsatisfactory as well as belittling.

2. The foregoing method has naturally led up to Millenarianism, which, planting itself mainly on the twentieth chapter, has been startling the world by frequent advents since before the days of Christ, and, though somewhat more cautious in our day, has not passed away from the ranks of many of the best leaders of Christendom, espe-

cially of the revivalistic type. These teach us that the present dispensation is a failure, and can only be rescued from final defeat by the appearance of Jesus Christ again in person on the face of the earth. Others map out the whole course of human destiny, so that you can see it on their charts, as if they had gotten back of all Divine mystery. This begets, on the one hand, indifference to duty, or on the other, fanatical enthusiasm. It reminds one of the old Bible-reading saint to whom was presented a commentary on the Book of Revelation. When inquired of how she enjoyed its teachings, she replied, "I understood the book very well before I read the commentary."

3. This book, the climax of the Bible, whether we regard it as a dream or a waking vision, is a drama, not cut into parts by limitations of time chronologically arranged. It is not a book of dates, but of events under Divine regulation. Higher and wider than all these, it is a revelation of the principles or laws of the Divine administration, whereby God is overseeing in the present, as well as in the past and in the future, everything affecting His government over men.

In this view, what a startling revelation have we in the *"wrath of the Lamb," or Divine love turned to anger!*

Art has attempted to express many a scene in the Apocalypse; but where is the genius sufficiently elevated into the realm of Divine things to put on canvas this vision, where men are fleeing, and calling for rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb?

4. Men may sneer at the idea of hell; they may philosophize until they imagine it is blotted out; they may dash after success in winning the world, forgetful of the judgment to come; they may revel and feast with all sensual hilarity; they may generously hope that there is no Divine punishment for guilt,—but this terrific scene, with the Lamb of God in anger, stands beyond the reach of all these follies and powerless madness, which is destined to the doom of eternal damnation.

5. What has become, in this outlook, of the "earnest expectation of the creature?"

The whole of the case is not in. Look forward to the seventh chapter. Therein is a vision of four angels standing on the four corners of the earth (such was the cosmogony of the date of this Apocalypse), holding the four winds of the earth, and another angel ascending from the east, commissioned with the work of sealing the servants of God. There is a halt in the Divine judgment

—wrath is not at once executed. Men do often take advantage of this fact, and sin away their day of grace; but, according to this scene, God gives to every man a full and fair chance to escape from sin and wrath, and to be sealed as one of the mighty host gathering before His throne, while the four winds of wrath are withheld from smiting the earth. Thousands of the tribes of Israel are sealed. The still more countless multitudes of the Gentiles escape from the coming wrath. God offers salvation to the most benighted soul on the face of the earth. Whenever a human being strikes the line between obedience and disobedience, he there has an opportunity to settle his own destiny now and forever. As Bishop William Taylor says of the African chief whom he visited in his dying hour, and heard him call, "O Nishwa, Nishwa, I am your man," and then comment, "If God did not hear and answer, He is not the Fellow [no irreverence in William Taylor was intended] I take Him to be." A dim ray of light leads to God's throne; or, avoided, points to endless night.

While teaching a class in comparative religions in the University of the Pacific, we had come to Clarke's sentiment discounting the impre-

catory Psalms, in his work on the "Ten Great Religions." I mentioned my impression to the class that either Clarke had not carefully studied those Psalms, or had never come to spiritual battles where he found the need of such swords of the Spirit as are represented in them. Just then an earthquake shook the building in which we were seated while the chandelier waved to and fro, and the walls and foundations quivered all around us. There leaped forth the quotation from Paul, "Behold the severity and the goodness of God!" It is not often one has an earthquake to emphasize a lesson or a Scripture quotation. But there was a line of harmony extending from that shaking building through the Psalm, and the altars of sacrifice and the myriads of human beings on earth, and the innumerable hosts of the redeemed joining the hallelujahs of the angels round about the throne, toward which the eyes of "Earnest Expectation" are ever looking.

VIII.

INTO THE NEW JERUSALEM.

"I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—Rev. xxi, 2.

The title of this sermon may suggest unhappy recollections of many a solo falling far short of an interpretation of the theme. Let us dismiss such disappointing torture in favor of some rare rendering of that great composition.

I. A city is a great magnet to attract mankind. Why it should be so is explained, in part, because it responds to the love of the artistic in its streets, buildings, laws, and parks, while the rural home, in spite of its opportunities, is too often very lacking in these satisfying elements. So that the country boy flees to the city and its perils. The city is also an expression of human energy, always fascinating to the best element in man. The city offers opportunity for business

enterprise and gain. It appeals to the love of fellowship and brotherliness, and is therefore attractive to all, except the misanthrope or the dreamer.

II. The Book of Revelation closes its appeal to mankind under the symbol of a great city. The name is the most significant possible. Why should it be called Jerusalem? Ask a New Englander to name his favorite city, the popular answer would be Boston. Come a little west, and it will be New York; farther west, and there is a growing disposition to say Chicago; while San Francisco for the time being centralizes the attractivness of the Pacific Coast. Doubtless some of these in the future will take a back seat. Speak to an Englishman about a great city, and he will say London. To the people of God, whether under the old dispensation or its outcome, the kingdom of heaven, Jerusalem, City of Peace, is the name to abide.

III. It may help our vision for a glance at this great city to clear away some of the incongruities and absurdities of a misleading literalism.

This false method is the bane of religious teaching and interpretation. It has led to endless misunderstanding and difference among theological writers, speculative discussion and false interpreta-

tion, no matter whether the theme be the Garden of Eden and the Creation, the giving of the law, the interpretation of foreordination and election, universal redemption and free gace, or the vision of prophecy, the poetry of the Psalms, and especially of this marvelous drama, the Apocalypse.

To literalize and materialize this vision of the New Jerusalem would be to miss its great revelation.

1. We have here a city *descending through the air,* balloon-like, coming down somewhere on the face of the earth; a city with buildings three hundred and seventy-five miles high; compared to our modern skyscraper, this were monstrous indeed, if we forget its hint at the "many mansions," with room for all.

2. A city with twelve gates, useless though each guarded by an angel; for they are never closed day or night. It is safe.

3. Its streets of gold; its buildings of the same, with their unbearable blinding crystalline light. How grotesque the whole spectacle, the same as would characterize the entire vision of the Apocalypse, interpreted with belittling literalism!

IV. May our eyes be opened to behold something of this City of God!

1. First, it is a descending city, having been a long time on its way earthward. We know not why it took so long to prepare for Noah and his altar, Abraham and his posterity, Moses and the law, Jesus and the redemption, the spread of the Gospel, and the successive reformations and revivals, down to our day, when the Tabernacle of God is more extensively with men than ever before.

2. There is a future tense to this vision. Most of it is in the great hereafter. Childhood is peculiarly sensitive to the hopes of the heavenly world. We can recall our fondness for hymns such as, "There is a land of pure delight," and "My heavenly home is bright and fair."

This does not pass out of our hearts, and, after the strenuous days of middle life, it generally becomes more and more attractive as the sunset draws near.

No Millenarian or Pre-Adventist theories should be allowed to obscure the inspiring prospect of immortality and eternal life beyond the resurrection of the dead and the great day of judgment, where "we know not what we shall be, but we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

3. In the warfare through which we must pass to that future home, it were a hopeless struggle

if "the tabernacle of God were not *with men on the earth.*" He is with us in His natural providence: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," "Take no thought for the morrow." He is with us in our physical manhood; "I am fearfully and wonderfully made;" "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost." He is with us in a directing providence, against which we often vainly waste our strength: "I will guide you with mine eye." He is with us in special revelations of truth spoken by inspired men, and chiefly through the lips of Jesus. No man following His words can lose his way. He dwells with us in the influence of the Holy Spirit, quickening the conscience, enlightening the understanding, and comforting the soul. He is with the whole human race in its innate sense of righteousness and hatred of wrong, so long as these laws written in their heart are not obscured or blotted out by willful disobedience. God's tabernacle is with men when they pray in secret, or worship publicly in prayer and praise.

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high."

This vision of the Holy City includes both worlds,—that which now is as a sort of suburb to the New Jerusalem, and that which is to come, as limitless in its extent and existence as the vision of John's prophecies.

V. Turn we to look a little more definitely at some of the characteristics of this great city.

1. It was a city with walls. Fortunately, in our day, no walls are needed; they belong to the ages of savagery and human helplessness, when castle walls, moat and ditch, were needed against tribal hatred rendering life insecure from man and beast. But in this vision walls mean safety.

2. The extent of those walls indicates the roominess of the Home: they are three hundred and seventy-five miles to a side, or fifteen hundred miles around the city. Great London is less than fifty miles to a side. A large city can stand on a mile square: what, then, means this unthinkable vastness, but a hope for countless myriads of immortal souls saved from sin?

3. What of its buildings? Are they not ample, towering up as high as the walls are long, of golden splendor, the costliest thing in this world, brilliant as crystal, and such to be the home of the soul forever? I can not forget the personal

invitation of Professor Merrick to call and see him and his wife in one of the many mansions which Christ has gone to prepare.

4. The streets of a city add very much to its health, comfort, and beauty. Those of the New Jerusalem, how they contrast with poor old Jerusalem now—narrow, grimy, rough, dog-haunted, squalid—nothing much more disappointing than a visit to modern Jerusalem! But in the vision, the "former things have passed away," and the streets are pure gold of the same glassy sheen as the city itself. "Gold many hunted, sweat, and bled for gold," in this sordid life; there, it is but pavement beneath the feet.

5. Water, so necessary for our thirst in desert, in famine, in city; so beautiful as it leaps in mountain spray, in cataract falls, or binds the earth with broad ribbons of beauty, or mantles her shoulders with the garment of the mighty seas,—is not lacking in the Holy City. The River of the Water of Life springs from the midst of the throne, and rolls its pure flood, "clear as crystal," down the entire length of the streets. As the Abana dashes from Lebanon through Damascus groves, and sparkles its way to every part of the oldest city on earth, so in the New Jerusalem there is no

lack or thirst, but all "drink of the water of life freely."

6. There is shade and fruit; for on either side of the river is the Tree of Life, perpetually bearing, and the inhabitants thereof "eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

7. Is the city well lighted? We know how important this is; how, in our cities, light reduces crime, contributes to comfort and safety; how the electric flame caught by Ben Franklin has turned night into day; "so there shall be no night there." Once, when in the flesh, Jesus turned literally into light on Mount Hermon; His garments became white as the light. There is that in some persons which seems to bring a light with their very presence; and when they are gone, a shadow falls. Myriads of such will be in the Holy Ciy forever. *"The Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."*

8. What of its population and its company? A city were more desolate than the wilderness without society. That of the Holy City is exclusive and select; but only toward those who would be less at home there than in hell, and who, if admitted, would ruin heaven; for "without are

dogs [the depraved],—sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." These can not pass the Gates of Pearl with their angel guard, though open night and day.

I am not able to comprehend the possibility of being happy knowing that any fellow-man especially those of my love, are shut out from that city; and yet they shut themselves away in this life. My brother minister had a family of bright children, his prodigal brother was welcome to his home, and staid until the risk developed, of the whole household being ruined by the bad inmate; and though a brother, that tender-hearted Christian minister banished him. If he could endure such execution of righteous law in behalf of his children, may it not explain how God the Father, and Jesus, the Lamb of God, may provide, in mercy, a home for the elect, and another for the wicked, more tolerable to them than heaven could be, though its name be hell?

The state of society in the New Jerusalem may be judged in part by its escapes. "There shall be no more death." The prevalence of death is oppressive. Hearken in the night-time to the hum of the sound of the insect world, and remember

all will be dead when the snows fall; or listen to the cheery notes of the countless bird-world, their beauty and activity doomed to die; all animate life sweeping like so many waves across the world. With man, the globe is a graveyard; and, most horrible of all, since the time of the murder of Cain till Mukden's climax of human slaughter, death hath "reigned from Adam till now." The Son of man tasted death for every man. This is why, in the New Jerusalem, "there shall be no more death: neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

These are the negative qualities of the society of heaven; but who shall be there? They will surely know each other; for how could they be less intelligent than in this life?

It may help to compress our view to mention again the walls of the city so representative.

Each of the twelve gates a single pearl, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. This harks back to the Church of the old dispensation, out of which were sealed the hundred and forty-four thousand expressive of an unlimited number of the saved, including patriarchs and prophets whom one desires to meet and know.

The foundations of the walls of the city are

twelve precious stones. At the bottom, jasper, inscribed "Petros;" likely, next above, the blue sapphire, inscribed "John;" and on through the twelve flashing lights of beauty, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and the amethist, inscribed "with apostolic names, standing for the Church of Jesus Christ, whom no man can number," no census taker hath ever counted. Should they ever repeat what is now ringing round the world more and more, "All hail the power of Jesus' name!" we must join in the song. Or should that be left out of the chorus of the ten thousand and thousands of thousands singing, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God the Almighty reigneth!" we must wash our robes and be there to join.

9. The government of a city is still more important, in some respects, than its society; and especially is this so in the Holy City. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve Him." There will be no austerity of dreadful character. "They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads," and "they shall reign for ever and ever." In this life regeneration stamps the features with its mark, often very discoverable, and, if it has its way, will grow into a shining countenance; but pain

may distort and sorrow becloud. In the Heavenly Jerusalem they shall bear His name in their foreheads as the badge of heirship, being co-heirs with Jesus Christ, to reign with Him for ever and ever.

This sermon is in response to more than one request, but chiefly one. A few years ago two college classmates, with their wives, stood upon the snow-white shores of the Gulf of Mexico, as they beat upon the island of Santa Rosa in Pensacola Bay. Three of us started for our boat as the sun was descending toward the gulf in the western sky. Looking backward, there was a vision of a face looking sunward, framed in the blue of sky and gulf, spangled with the foam of the wave-crests dashing inward toward the land. It was a rare background for a face with which I have journeyed many a year through life's conflicts, sorrows, and griefs; but it was transformed in the light of that vision, with which it was evidently enwrapped. It was worth the long journey and the life conflict to behold. It seemed as though the face belonged to that other world, where we expect to dwell with those who have gone out of our family circle, into that innumerable company. Because the wearer of that face asked it, this sermon has been recalled as one more expression as the *"Earnest Expectation."*

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